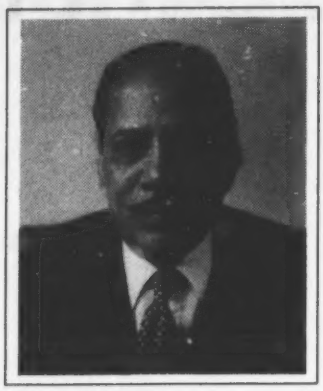
World HABITAT Day
Monday 1 October 1990

SHELTER AND URBANIZATION

INFORMATION KIT

best copy available

MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT), DR. ARCOT RAMACHANDRAN, ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD HABITAT DAY, MONDAY, 1 OCTOBER 1990



The twentieth century is the age of the urban transitions, and the last phase of that transition is taking place in the developing countries. Between the years 1960 and 1980, the urban population of developing countries more than doubled, increasing from 460 million to 966 million, and this amounted to an increase of 4.5 per cent each year. During the 1990s, the annual increase in urban population is expected to be of the order of 3 per cent in Asia and Latin America and 4 per cent in Africa. But this slight decrease in percentage growth is deceptive and gives no cause for relief, for it is taking place against a background of ever-growing absolute numbers of people. For this reason, by the end of this decade the urban population is projected to reach nearly 2 billion, representing another doubling in the two decades since 1980. By the end of the century, nearly one half of the developing world's population will be living in cities and towns, whereas in 1960 it was only a little more than one fifth. The speed of this urban transition is unprecedented in all of human history. Even if the high overall population growth in developing countries is taken into consideration, it must also be stressed that urban population has persistently outstripped overall population growth over the past decades and is projected to do so in the decades to come. Some time in the first half of the century, the developing countries will be as urban as many industrialized countries are today. But will they be at the same level of social and economic development? Not unless decisive and innovative policies are adopted now. Already 60 per cent of the 1 billion people below the poverty line in the developing countries are to be found in towns and cities, and their numbers are growing daily.

For while it is true that cities are making major contributions to the output of developing countries, we are facing the apparently contradictory situation that their physical and living environment, and so the quality of life of their inhabitants, is rapidly deteriorating, thus placing in question the long-term ability of these cities and towns to play their crucial development role.

This deterioration manifests itself in a number of ways, the first and foremost of these being the deterioration of shelter conditions in the absence of housing strategies capable of meeting the escalating demand for shelter produced by rapid urbanization. As a consequence, in the urban centres of the developing countries we are witnessing a proliferation of slums and squatter settlements, often containing from one third to more than one half of a city's population. The rudimentary shelter one finds here, more often than not constructed of a variety of discarded materials, ranging from cardboard to more solid, but still primitive, building materials, neither offers protection from the elements of nature nor a suitable environment in which to raise a family.

Health problems are rampant, as there are few sanitary facilities with very often more than a 1000 families sharing a single standpipe. As deplorable as this may seem, these families are indeed still the lucky ones. In many of these settlements there is no water supply at all and their inhabitants must depend on vendors, who often charge more for their water than what those who have access to piped water must pay. That the urban poor have survived under these conditions and continue to make their important contribution to urban economic life is a tribute to their resilience, but their continued survival should and must not be used as an excuse for further inaction or benign neglect: the mounting costs in terms of health, productivity and the rending of the social fabric are just too high.

All of these manifestations of the decay of the urban physical and living environment are symptoms, completely or in part, of another looming crisis, which is that the physical infrastructure as well as the urban management and planning capacity of cities in the developing countries is being stretched to the limit, and this has severe negative implications not only for the well-being of their inhabitants, but also for the future economic growth of

the urban sector in the developing countries. Already power blackouts, interruptions in water supply, insufficient public transport, traffic congestion, and potholed roads, just to cite a few examples, are commonplace in third world cities. Sufficient and well-maintained infrastructure is a fundamental requirement for both efficient economic activities and their expansion as well as for the maintenance of human health and welfare. Given the current pace of urbanization and the carrying capacity of the urban infrastructure, it becomes clear that unless drastic steps are taken, we are slowly reaching the breaking point in many cities of the developing world.

As the physical environment in and around cities deteriorates, those affected most are the urban poor, who make up to 30 or 60 per cent of the urban population in developing countries and whose numbers are growing; their substandard living environment does not protect them from human and other wastes and from other forms of pollution. The subsequent increased costs of health-care and the productivity losses due to mortality and morbidity from gastro-enteric and respiratory diseases and malnutrition are only indicators of the economic impacts on the poor; the unquantifiable costs of human suffering and lowered quality of life cannot be measured adequately. For this reason, for the poor, apart from employment, the main priorities remain improved housing and the provision of basic water and sanitation services at affordable costs.

Recognition of this approaching urban crisis has indeed helped to concentrate the minds of policy makers. There is an increasing awareness that the positive economic functions which cities fulfil can only be maintained and made more effective through large-scale investments in infrastructure and urban services, and that these can potentially be financed out of revenues generated in cities.

As for the improvement of shelter conditions, it has become clear that the satisfaction of the present and future demand for safe and sound shelter cannot depend on public sector housing programmes, for the scale of needs far exceeds the current and future financial capacities of governments. Therefore, more realistic and pragmatic measures are required and these must build on the self-help shelter construction efforts of the urban poor and include mobilization and strengthening of the private construction sector, both formal and informal, for that purpose. Already there is sufficient evidence from individual project experience in developing countries that such an approach can indeed be successful. What is required now is to turn these experiences into full-scale national policies and programmes.

In order to assist this process and to meet the challenge posed by this housing crisis, the United Nations launched the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 in early 1989, and entrusted the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) with its implementation. Informed by the experience of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) for which the Centre also provided the organizing secretariat, the Global Strategy for Shelter will be the blueprint for action in the field of shelter of the United Nations for the remainder of this century and beyond.

The Strategy provides a framework for action for both national governments and the international community in order to set in motion a process to redress the deplorable shelter conditions of those hundreds of millions of human beings, the overwhelming proportion of whom is to be found in developing countries, who must at present do without a decent home, and to initiate forward-looking actions **now** in view of the rapidly escalating demand, particularly in the urban areas of the developing countries. In implementing the Global Strategy for Shelter, national governments and the international communities are, in effect, preparing themselves for the future, and this underscores the timeliness and importance of this initiative.

The fundamental premise of the Global Strategy for Shelter is that rather than being the principal providers of housing, governments in the developing countries should concentrate on creating an enabling environment which allows people themselves to construct or improve their shelter, while governments focus on facilitating access to finance, land and infrastructure. In many ways, such an enabling role for government will be more demanding than the traditional one. But just as the challenge is great, so are the potential rewards, for not only would success mean the fulfilment of a basic human need, but also provide the basis for economic growth and employment, contribute to social and political stability, and enhance the urban physical and human environment.

Much progress is already being made. Currently UNCHS (Habitat) is assisting nearly 40 governments in drafting new or improved national shelter strategies in accordance with the guidelines of the Global Strategy. Much more has to be done. Strategies must be translated into actions on the ground. I should therefore like to use the occasion of the celebrating of this year's World HABITAT Day to call upon the international community, national governments, local authorities, the private sector, community groups, non-governmental organizations, and individuals in all countries to join hands to meet the urban challenge by supporting the aims and goals of the Global Strategy for Shelter. Urbanization in the developing countries is an irreversible process undertaking a political, economic, social and cultural transformation of unprecedented scale. Urbanization can spell disaster or success depending on how seriously we exploit its potential for sustainable human development.

READEX FICHE

WORLD HABITAT DAY Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

SHELTER AND URBANIZATION

Scenario

Some 140,000 people in the developing world will today abandon their rural villages and move into towns and cities to start a new life. These new arrivals are part of a large-scale migration from the rural areas to the towns and cities which is a contributory factor to the phenomenon of urbanization. The process has been underway in the developing countries for the last 40 or so years and is projected to continue well into the next century. Urbanization also occurred in the developed countries earlier this century and has now more or less stabilized there. In Europe and North America, however, it took place on a much smaller scale than is now occurring in the developing countries where populations are much larger.

Urbanization is more than just the movement of people from rural areas to urban settlements and the increase of numbers within the towns and cities. It is an important phenomenon that is bringing with it both social and economic changes on a global scale. The countries concerned are in the process of moving from their age-old agricultural systems to more open and complex economies in which towns and cities will play a major role. Changes are coming to the rural areas with the formation of small towns that will help to develop their hinterlands. Changes will inevitably come to the people who are leaving the traditional lifestyles of the rural areas to seek a better life, more opportunities, and new occupations in the towns and cities.

Housing this massive influx of urban immigrants is a major problem. Low-income people can only move into the low-income areas of the cities. When they are unable to pay even the lowest rental, they take the matter into their own hands and construct a simple shelter from whatever materials they can find. As a result, squatter settlements in most cities of the developing countries are spreading at an astonishing rate. On the positive side, people will be available to contribute to the country's growing economy, to provide labour and to contribute goods and services to the nation.

One of the greatest challenges of the next 30 years or so that national governments and city managers face will be to cope with a burgeoning city population of poor people who need work, housing and other amenities, and who are causing the spread of low-income settlements in the towns and cities of the developing world. They must also be drawn into the countries' economies and integrated into a productive role.

PART I. A BROAD LOOK AT THE URBANIZING WORLD

Q: How quickly is urbanization occurring in the developing countries?

A: Urbanization is occurring rapidly and on an enormous scale.

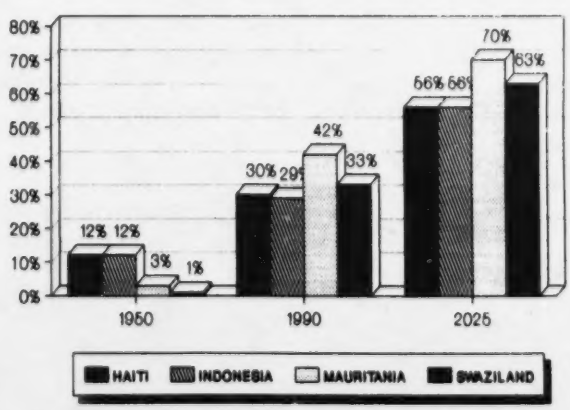
- In 1950, the world had around 737 million people in its cities. By 1990, the number had tripled to almost 2.2 billion and could reach 5 billion by the year 2025.

- In 1950, 30 per cent of the world's total population was living in cities. By the year 2000, virtually half the world's total population (49 per cent) will live in cities for the first time in history. This could rise to 60 per cent by the year 2025. Of these people, four out of five will live in developing countries.

- The experience of some African countries can be used to illustrate these enormous changes. In Swaziland, for example, less than 1 per cent of the 1950 population was urbanized. Today it has grown to 33 per cent, but could rise to 63 per cent of the total population by the year 2025. Similarly, Mauritania's urban population may grow from 3 per cent in 1950 to 70 per cent by 2025. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had 18 per cent of its people in cities in 1950. By 2025 it could be as high as 85 per cent.

- In other parts of the world, a similar pattern of urbanization can be seen in the same period. Nepal's urban population could rise from 2 per cent to 30 per cent, Haiti and Indonesia from 12 per cent to 56 per cent, and Bangladesh from 4 per cent to 36 per cent, between 1950 and 2025.

The rate of urbanization in four developing countries



Q: How is urbanization affecting the growth of urban settlements?

A: Individual towns and cities are growing quickly at the present time. New urban settlements are being born in rural areas to serve the needs of the changing countryside. Cities are becoming larger than ever before.

- The world had 76 cities with a population of 1 million in 1950. Most of these "million cities" were in Europe and North America.
- There are likely to be 440 cities of 1 million people each in the year 2000 of which half will be in South and East Asia.
- Half the urban population of the world will live in "million cities" by the year 2025.
- Megacities (cities over 4 million) are now reaching a size never before seen in history, and are dwarfing the "million cities". As the century ends, Mexico City and São Paulo (Brazil) could have 25 million inhabitants each. The Indian cities of Bombay and Calcutta are likely to have 15 million, and a dozen other cities including Cairo, Beijing, New Delhi, Bangkok and Rio de Janeiro could have passed the 10 million mark.

Q: What problems are being produced by the rapid growth of cities?

A: (i) *Homelessness*

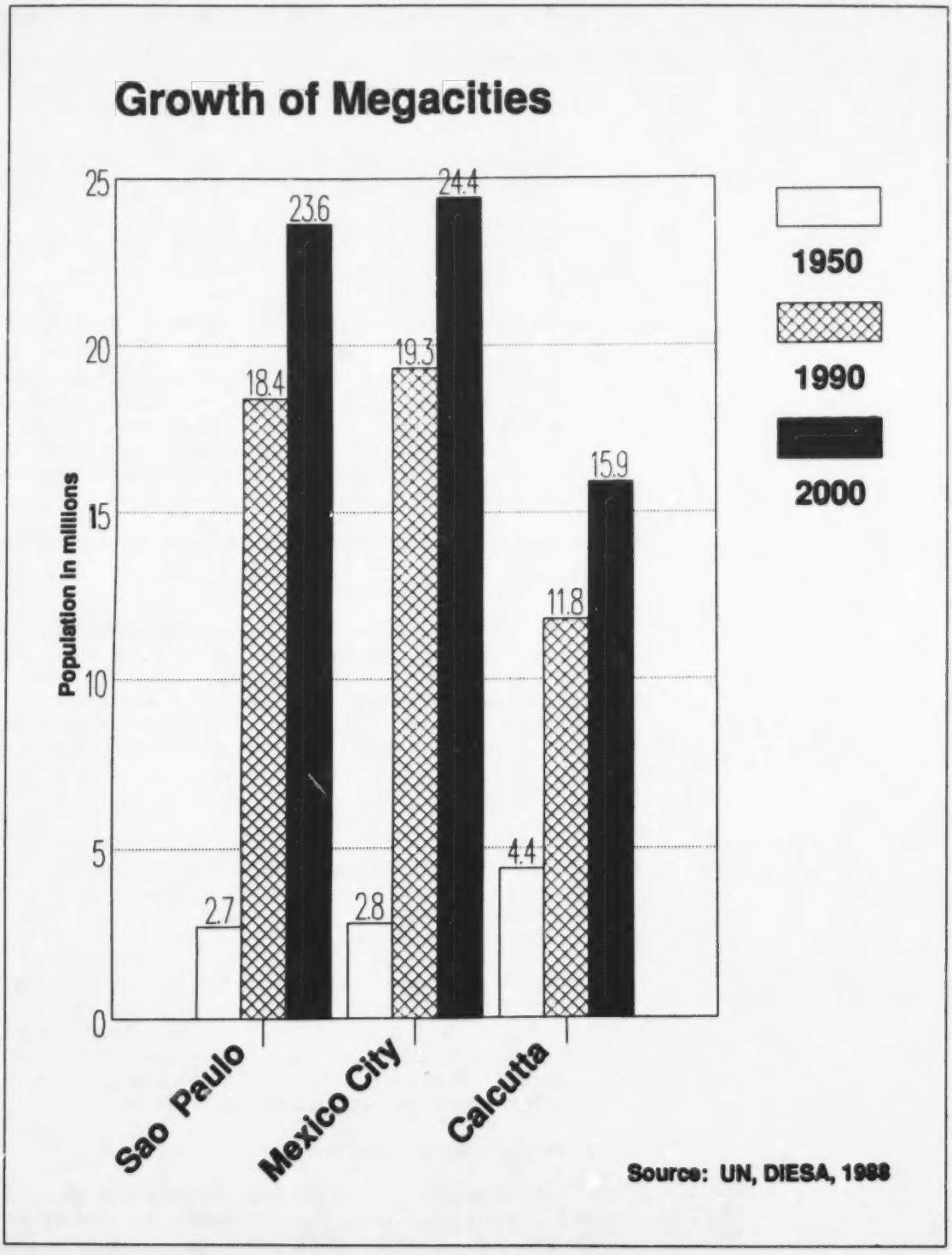
It is estimated that 100 million people worldwide have no form of shelter at all. In Cairo, Egypt, the tombs in the city cemeteries are home to hundreds of thousands people who have nowhere else to go apart from their City of the Dead. In India, half a million people will be forced to sleep tonight on the streets of Calcutta and a further 100,000 men, women and children will spend the night on the pavements of Bombay. Such homeless people are now found in most of the cities of the developing world and are becoming conspicuous in the cities of the developed world as well.

These examples indicate a poverty shift from the rural areas to the cities. Whereas formerly, many poor people lived in the rural areas, the poorest of the poor now live in urban settlements, in deprivation and destitution. They have brought their poverty to the cities where at least it is more visible and can therefore be faced and hopefully improved.

The homeless rarely benefit from housing schemes. They are likely to be at the bottom of the list when selections are made, and they cannot benefit from home-improvement projects because they have nothing to start from. Yet the homeless, more than anyone else, need assistance from governments, from city authorities, donors, and others involved in the housing challenge. Without that help, their life of misery and hardship cannot be improved.

A: (ii) *The growth of squatter settlements*

One billion people across the world are living in shanty towns at the present time, and 60 per cent of city dwellers in developing countries will be squatters by the end of the century. Half the population of Calcutta, Lusaka (Zambia) and


Growth of Megacities
Population in millions
25
20
15
10
5
0
2.7
18.4
23.6
2.8
19.3
24.4
4.4
11.8
15.9
1950
1990
2000
Sao Paulo
Mexico City
Calcutta
Source: UN, DIESA, 1988

Colombo (Sri Lanka) are now living in shanties as do two thirds of the people of Bogotá (Colombia) and El Salvador. The proportion is even higher in Mexico City and Lima (Peru).

In squatter settlements, people find their own solution to the problem of housing by building a simple shelter from locally available materials. Yet the problems of facilities and infrastructure remain. Consequently, water supply, sewage disposal and lighting are usually inadequate in squatter settlements, as are social amenities like schools, clinics and markets.

A: (iii) *The pressure of growing numbers*

An influx of 300 new job seekers every day into the city of Bombay is placing a growing strain on its services and posing problems for its managers. Faced with similar problems, most cities in developing countries can no longer cope with the large numbers of migrants that seek to be assimilated into urban life. The new arrivals all require shelter, employment, a water supply, sewage disposal, garbage collection, access roads and lighting, as well as facilities like clinics, schools, transport and markets. This growing demand cannot be met, either through the efforts of Central Government or through international aid.

The only solution is to improve the management of towns and cities so that financial and labour resources are utilized in the best possible way. More investment is needed to strengthen management skills and to assist local governments to deal more effectively with the urban poor. Such investment will benefit everyone - the people who remain in the rural areas, the populations of small rural towns and the inhabitants of the city as well. A current UNCHS (Habitat)/UNDP/World Bank project is concentrating on strengthening urban management in developing countries.

Q: Why is urbanization taking place at the present time?

A: Urbanization is a phenomenon which has occurred mostly in the twentieth century. The first country to urbanize was the United Kingdom, where many people had moved to towns and cities by the beginning of this century as a result of industrialization. Other countries in Europe and North America quickly followed suit as they industrialized.

Since the 1950s, urbanization has gained momentum in the developing countries, where the following different factors are contributing to the process:

(i) *World population growth*

A major factor contributing to urbanization is the alarming rate of human population growth. From a population of 2.5 billion in 1950, the world population has doubled to its present level of around 5.2 billion. Every day 230,000 babies are born, a figure which amounts to 85 million per annum. Of these, 80 per cent live in the developing countries. Inevitably, the rate of urbanization must correspondingly increase.

(ii) *Net increase*

The excess of births over deaths - known as net growth - is also contributing to urbanization. Such massive numbers of people are producing a natural increase in world population which is leading to an increase in the size of cities.

(iii) *Developing countries are expanding their economies*

Very high rates of urbanization can be seen in countries that have shown a rapid rate of economic growth like Côte D'Ivoire. The present, unstoppable wave of urbanization that is sweeping across the developing world is a net result of the modernization of their economies. As economies expand and countries show successful economic growth, so people are drawn to the centres of industry and production to contribute to the expansion of urban economies. When the governments of developing countries realize this, they may develop a more realistic, tolerant and constructive attitude to their spreading shanty towns.

(iv) *Leaving the land for the lure of the cities*

People can be "forced" out of the rural areas when populations rise and there is no space for further expansion. The deterioration of the environment can also force people to leave for the towns and cities. This happened in Somalia in the 1970s and is happening in Ethiopia now. In addition, oppressive rural customs and discriminatory inheritance laws can persuade people to move away from the rural areas.

In turn, the cities attract rural migrants, by offering work opportunities and the chance of an improved standard of living or better facilities. In addition, the excitement of city life can lure people away from the countryside.

It is important to realize that urbanization is not going to stop or slow down until a large percentage of the population of developing countries is living and working in towns. This point will be reached some time in the next century. Developing countries are currently at a transitional stage of their development which will lead in the future to a predominantly urban population and a modern, urban-based economy.

PART II. URBANIZATION - PROS AND CONS

P. Ramu, a young man of 22 years from southern India, left his rural home three years ago to move to the city of Madras. Apart from his community and its age-old traditions, he also left behind a rigid caste system that condemned him, as a Harijan, to remain the lowest of the low in society. Although his life as a cobbler in the city is still hard, he is content to be a free man.

Ndolo, a mother of three children, left her village on the coast of Cameroon soon after she divorced her husband. Now, instead of cultivating a farm of yams and cassava, she sells children's clothing on her market stall in the city of Douala. As housing is difficult there, her children go to school in the village and Ndolo must send money home to maintain them. Ndolo is one of many hard working and business-minded West African women who have made a painful, yet successful transition to urban life.

These and other cases show that movement to the towns and cities can be, for the people themselves, a positive experience. They may free themselves from class or social prejudices, sexist attitudes or taboos. In addition, they can benefit from improved educational or health facilities, improved work possibilities and more stimulating social contacts.

However, it is not always so. Many will be unable to obtain viable employment. They will remain, struggling for survival, in poverty and misery, in an increasingly hostile and competitive urban survival.

Some receive the immediate benefits of urbanization; others do not. It is inevitable that with a global phenomenon on the scale of urbanization, its far-reaching effects will touch the lives of people in different ways. The disadvantages of urbanization and the problems it is causing, reflect the under side of development. These must be weighed against the very real advantages, particularly economic, that urbanization is bringing to the developing world.

The Problems That Urbanization May Bring

(i) *Unemployment* and its link to informal work.

The survival of a poor person in the city depends on whether or not he or she can find an immediate source of livelihood. Yet, jobs are few and far between. In the cities of the developing world, the unemployment situation can only be described as formidable. The African region, for example, needs to create 10 million jobs per year in an economic situation that continues to be weak. Worldwide, nearly 60 million new jobs would be needed per year to keep pace with urban growth.

These jobs simply do not exist, and in many countries employment opportunities in the "formal sector", i.e. paid, regular employment, are minimal.

Why, then, do people migrate to towns to work if there is little chance of paid employment? The answer lies in the "informal sector", where people create their own employment by offering goods and services to both poor and affluent city dwellers. They rise to the challenge of survival by creating work opportunities for themselves, where possible, accepting unskilled work, or entering the service

sector as house-servants or watchmen. In these ways they are making a contribution to the economies of both the city and the country.

(ii) *Disease*

Another major problem, which grows as unplanned settlements spread, is the threat of disease. The diseases of shanty towns tend to be the diseases of poverty. Respiratory infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia are prevalent in conditions of overcrowding, where up to 10 people may share a single, badly ventilated room. Water supplies and sewage disposal systems are generally inadequate, leading to diarrhoea and dysentery, both of which can take their toll of young children. Infestation with parasitic worms can reduce the vitality of the community. Anaemia and tuberculosis are usually common and are accentuated by widespread malnutrition. In areas where shanties are built over swamps or near to water, malaria can be a major cause of death. In addition, in overcrowded settlements, sexually-transmitted diseases are also a major problem.

In the settlement of Tondo, Metro Manila, in the Philippines, for example, 80 per cent of young children were undernourished before any improvements were made. Tuberculosis was also rife and the rate of parasitism by worms was 90 per cent. In this instance, residents set out to improve their conditions and gradually over a six-year period, they created a better living environment.

Many diseases of the shanties can be eradicated when conditions are improved. Piped water and improved sewage disposal can reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases and better drainage can solve the problem of malaria.

Advantages of Urbanization

Many positive aspects of urbanization are directly linked to economic growth and development. The growth of towns and cities is therefore an essential stage of the development process and a feature of growing economies.

(i) *Economic development*

Urbanization has been experienced by all developed countries, whether they specialized in agricultural or industrial production, because economic development requires urban centres that can provide services such as transport, finance and communication, as well as links to national and international markets. Therefore, as an economy modernizes, a system of human settlements is needed, and small- and intermediate-sized towns develop to form links between the villages and the city and provide services to the developing rural areas.

On average, to date, over 50 per cent of GNP of developing countries is generated by towns and cities. This figure is likely to increase to two thirds by the end of the century. Rapid economic growth can be achieved because urbanization allows people to work in specialized capacities and this division of labour leads to greater efficiency.

(ii) *Provision of labour*

Growing economies also require a large labour force. This is being provided in developing countries by the new arrivals from the rural areas who offer their services as unskilled labourers or enter the informal sector. Gradually, some will acquire

training or skills and be absorbed into regular employment, leaving vacancies for new, incoming migrants to occupy. Thus, there is a gradual but definite assimilation of people into the labour markets of settlements and into urban life.

PART III. NEW CITIES FROM OLD - PROVIDING POOR CITY DWELLERS WITH HOMES

Some years ago, the settlement of Tondo in Manila, the Philippines, was a squalid shanty town of 80,000 people. It had no water supply, no waste disposal and very few toilets. Diseases like tuberculosis were rife and infant mortality was a high as 13 per cent. One quarter of the homes were built over pools of filthy, stagnant water.

Over a six-year period, substantial changes were made to this settlement. Most of the houses were improved; the rest were completely rebuilt. Basic services, like piped water, electricity and sewage disposal were gradually installed and the refurbished township now has roads, schools and markets. This transformation was achieved through the combined efforts of the Government of the Philippines and UNCHS (Habitat) who helped the people of Tondo to upgrade their homes themselves.

Off the coast of West Africa, in Cape Verde, most of the city of Praia was one huge shanty town, with no water, drainage or sewage disposal. The Government, working with UNCHS (Habitat), set out to provide the poorest urban residents with reasonable housing and better living conditions. As a result, infrastructure, like roads, water and sanitation, has been improved. New buildings are going up and old ones are being improved with locally produced materials. As schools and community buildings have already been built, Praia has now taken on a new appearance.

These projects, only two of UNCHS (Habitat)'s current and recent projects among over 250 projects in more than 100 countries at the present time, illustrate a new global philosophy to shanty towns in developing countries. This new approach is known as the "enabling strategy". Enabling is essentially a way of making things easier for communities to help themselves with their housing problems. It should remove obstacles that people face as far as possible, give support, and change existing rules and regulations so that it is easier for poor people to upgrade their homes.

The housing situation for the urban poor is formidable. By the year 2000, 60 per cent of all people in the developing world will live in shanty towns. At the present time, 50 per cent of Bombay is shanties and two thirds of all housing in Manila is "illegal", just two examples which portray the general state of affairs in the cities of the developing world. As the tide of urbanization causes shanty settlements to proliferate and grow larger by the day, it is obvious that governments can no longer provide homes for increasing numbers of urban poor.

The role of government must therefore change from "provider" to "enabler", and the success of the whole scheme depends on the ability of governments to adopt and plan for their new role. They must streamline bureaucratic procedures, make legal and financial arrangements easier, and provide services, like roads, water supply, clinics and so on, which communities cannot provide for themselves, making use of community participation to a significant extent. In addition, governments must insist that the urban rich play their part. Some finance for the housing of the urban poor could be raised if the urban elite paid adequate property

and other taxes. After all, it is they who largely benefit from the services and infrastructure that government provides.

Ways in which Governments Should Support the Enabling Strategy

Tenure

- To enable people in squatter settlements to obtain title deeds;
- To change and adopt new rules and regulations to facilitate this.

Land-use regulations

- To control subdivisions;
- To stipulate minimum plot sizes;
- To make building codes easier so that they are more appropriate to local conditions.

Infrastructure and services

- To enable infrastructure (water, electricity, sanitation, roads, etc) to be installed;
- To enable social services (primary education, basic health- care, garbage disposal, etc) to be set up.

Credit facilities

- Municipal and national revenue systems need to be made more efficient so that:
- Financial arrangements to enable poor people to purchase low- cost building materials can be made;
- Small loans can be made available to people without collateral or regular employment.

In many developing countries, building codes impose very high standards of construction on all members of the population yet the majority cannot afford them. These codes now need to be downgraded to what can be realistically achieved. Similarly, laws relating to land-use regulations, subdivisions and plot size need to be streamlined to help the urban poor. In the same way, land- tenure systems which tended to favour the rich and powerful in the past should now be revised to assist poor people to obtain the title deeds to their homes. When a title deed has been acquired, people become eligible for loans and credit facilities which will bring about improvements both to their lifestyle and to their dwellings, leading, in turn, to greater social and political stability within the shanty-town community.

Some governments are still responding to their growing shanty towns by evicting the tenants and demolishing their homes. However, shanties invariably spring up again elsewhere, and loss of housing at times of acute shortages of shelter creates its own problems. But first and foremost, considerable suffering is experienced by the poor families whose homes and assets are lost. The only ones to benefit are, of course, those who have alternative, and financially rewarding, plans for the land that the squatters occupy.

At the same time, a lot of support was given to rural development projects with the rationale that if living conditions in the rural areas were improved, fewer people would leave for the towns. Many of these projects were useful in improving conditions in the rural areas, but in the long run, they had a limited effect on urbanization and did little to slow down the wave of migrants to the cities.

Some governments responded to the growing numbers of migrants by embarking on massive schemes of high-rise apartments which can now be seen in cities like Bangkok. These projects had little success because they were not appropriate to the lifestyle of the people, were costly both to the government and to the tenants, and needed to be subsidized heavily. As it turned out, only reasonably well paid people could actually afford to live in them. Others who tried, found they could not meet their other basic expenses such as food, and moved back to the shanties. As a solution to low-income housing needs, high-rise apartments did not work.

During the 1970s, a new line of approach was tried. If governments could not provide an entire housing unit, it would be logical to give people a place to build and provide infrastructure. This gave rise to the schemes known as "sites-and-services" where families received a surveyed plot, a title deed and some basic services such as water, access roads and sewage disposal.

These schemes had little success in many cases because they were located far from town where land was cheap and transport arrangements were inadequate. One project in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for example, was situated 30 kilometres from the city with no transport for people working in town. It inevitably failed. Also at this time, some squatter-settlement upgrading was carried out by governments, but these projects backfired because the improvement caused rents to go up and the poorest members of the community had to leave.

In general, throughout the 1970s, there were two main lines of approach - some squatter settlement upgrading by governments, rather than the people, to contain the crisis of large-scale urbanization, and sites-and-services schemes. Neither of these approaches produced the desired effect because they failed to make use of the potentialities of the communities. Moreover, they also failed to recognize that the basic problem was poverty. Nor did they help the poorest of the poor - the lowest 10 per cent of the community - the utterly homeless.

It became apparent that a new approach was needed - a new philosophy. It could be ignored no longer that the poor had done a lot to help themselves, without help from the governments or city councils, without loans, and they had utilized any resource that they could afford. Governments had also realized that they could not provide for the growing numbers of urban homeless alone; they must involve others, and in particular, they must use the people themselves. The people were willing to

use their energy, their time, their small savings, together with their initiative and resourcefulness, to solve their housing problems.

Out of this resourcefulness of the people, the new approach, the "enabling strategy", was born. It aimed, in essence, to make things easier for the people to improve their shelter conditions themselves. This new philosophy is one of the basic principles of the United Nations' Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 which strives for adequate shelter for all by that year. This was adopted by the United Nations in 1988 and many countries are now applying its recommendations.

The Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000

- **Aims for *shelter for all* by the year 2000;**
- **Promotes an *enabling approach* whereby governments enable the people to improve their shelter situation themselves, by making it easier to:**
  - **Obtain security of tenure and other legal requirements;**
  - **Work with appropriate building codes;**
  - **Have access to finance for housing; and**
  - **Have access to low-cost building materials.**
- **Harnesses the energies and skills of the people themselves to improve their homes through the enabling approach, involving the participation of the community, especially women.**

The main goal of the Global Strategy is to encourage governments to set up national shelter strategies based on an enabling approach. For example, in Nicaragua, where many people have been displaced by the internal situation, and others made homeless by the Hurricane Joan in 1988, attention is now being focused on low-income groups. Uganda is currently devising a shelter strategy to integrate housing needs into its large-scale task of reconstruction, and Indonesia is focusing on suitable methods of housing finance to assist its enormous population.

Financial arrangements, in all developing countries, must now benefit low-income groups if the "enabling approach" is to be successful. The demand for financial assistance is so great that new approaches to finance are needed, like Turkey's special fund for housing which is supported by taxes on luxury items, and Sri Lanka's saving scheme which reaches the people through post offices and other outlets. In Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines, a certain percentage of a salary is saved for a compulsory saving scheme for housing.

Non-governmental organizations are also helpful in organizing finance for people of low-income to purchase or to build. NGOs are working with the Government of Sri Lanka in implementing its Million Houses

Programme and the Government of Kerala, India, with its Subsidized Aided Self-help Housing Project of which the first phase will be 25,000 housing units.

Most governments now appreciate the involvement of NGOs in national housing issues. These organizations, which are usually small, well-organized and work well with the people, can form important links between the governments and the people. Apart from raising finance, NGOs have shown their worth in training, research, generating employment and lobbying to change the laws.

Adequate housing for all by the year 2000 can only be achieved if people are able to help themselves in their bid for low-cost housing. Governments must enable people to improve their living conditions. In the long run, it is the energy and initiative of the shanty dwellers that will produce new cities from old.

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

SISTERS OF SURVIVAL

Many women are denied decent living conditions within the cities. Improvements are urgently needed

Yu Lan Chen is a young woman from one of the villages in the Taiwan Province of China, who recently left her rural home for city life. Jobs are readily available in the city of T'ai-pei and Yu Lan quickly found work in the electronics industry which currently employs 1 million women in Taiwan Province.

In South East Asia's newly industrialized countries and areas, as many as 90 per cent of the workers in the electronics industry are women. Most of these are migrants from the rural areas.

Yu Lan is one of the lucky ones. Millions of other women in the developing countries of Latin America, Africa and other parts of Asia are moving to the cities to seek work, but it is difficult for poorly educated women to obtain employment. They have left the deprivations of the rural areas to face the hardships of the city.

The migration of these rural women is one aspect of the current phenomenon of urbanization, the concentration and growth of population in towns and cities. In some parts of the world, like the Asian countries of the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of women migrants outnumbers men. Many of these women are young, single and childless. Some are married and an increasing number are the heads of families and must work to provide for their children.

This migration of women marks a new role for the women of the developing world. From their traditional role of farmers, child bearers and mothers, women are starting to make other contributions to national economies. They can be found not only in the factories of the newly industrializing countries, but also entering the service sector as housemaids, children's nurses and even as prostitutes. When formal employment does not come their way, they create their own niche, by knitting, sewing, vending, hawking and in a host of other ways. As they provide goods and services both to the urban poor and the middle classes, they are also breaking down stereotypes about female occupations. Sari-clad Indian women can be seen hauling bricks or blocks for construction and in some African cities women are taking on a new role as taxi drivers.

There are many different reasons why such large numbers of women are leaving the rural areas. In some male dominated societies, women do not inherit land or property and if they have no husband, the cities provide the only solution to survive. Some seek to leave behind them the repressive attitudes of the rural areas where they are second class citizens or suffer from rigid social systems. Most are seeking work and financial gain and a few are looking for a better education. The excitement of the city also lures many migrant women from the countryside.

Yet, the problems faced by the new arrivals are enormous - not least is poverty and the need to have a source of income. In addition, they must still contend with household chores. Even child raising, far from the support of friends and family in the rural areas, poses new problems.

One of the major problems that migrant women face is housing. In some countries, women are prevented by law from owning a home. They are often denied access to loans and other forms of credit and are last on the list for housing schemes. So they are forced into conditions of substandard housing, with an unhealthy living environment in which to raise their children.

Some urban women may opt for fewer children because of the increased costs of raising them in the city. However, others are likely to continue having large families as long as they live in a situation of insecurity. Children must help with both housework and income-generating tasks and provide the chance of care in old age. This tends to produce a vicious cycle of high fertility, poor education and poor income, in which low-income families become trapped.

Only when their standard of living is raised, and some form of security achieved, are women likely to have fewer children. Owner occupancy of their home could provide that security. This could also open the doors to loans and credit facilities that may help poor women to set up businesses or receive training, leading, in turn, to a more secure income and a better future. They are then likely to limit the size of their families and raise a few healthy and better educated children. When women have reached this state of security, the alarming population growth rates currently being experienced by many developing countries may start to decline.

Women entering the cities represent half the potential labour force of their city as well as being the guardians of the next generation. They generally work hard for very little pay in appalling conditions. It is time that their work was shown more appreciation and life was made a little easier for them. This could be done by helping them to improve their educational standards and to acquire other skills so that they can be absorbed into better-paid jobs. Child care facilities would enable them to work or study. Access to loans would help them to obtain better shelter for their families. Laws should be modified so that women have the same opportunities as men to own houses, participate in housing schemes and receive benefits from housing institutions. Until these improvements are made, the women of the developing world will be unable to play their full part in the economy of their country and in its development process.

In its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, "Shelter and Urbanization", the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) recognizes the special problems that confront rural women as they migrate to the cities. Also through the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, adopted by the United Nations, UNCHS (Habitat) calls on governments and individuals to assist women to have access to shelter, employment, and decent living conditions within the cities.

Within a broad policy for the advancement of women in society as a whole, UNCHS (Habitat) gives specific support to women in housing policy and their access to finance and land. UNCHS (Habitat) also recognizes that shelter should be designed with the needs of women and their families in mind.

Women also have roles to play in employment within the housing sector, from construction through to the professional cadres of architects, engineers and planners.

Through the organization of training programmes and seminars, and through projects that have women as a particular target group, like the project in Zimbabwe which has incorporated many women heads of households, UNCHS (Habitat) actively promotes women in housing.

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

NO PLACE TO GO: ASPECTS OF EVICTION

Eviction not only destroys homes it disrupts lives

When Alfredo Cortudoy and his neighbours were evicted from their home in the shanty town of Pasay in Manila, the Philippines, he was treated with a degree of consideration rarely seen in such situations. They were offered sites on a government resettlement scheme and 15 days' notice to take down their wooden shelters, and their entire households and building materials were transported by government lorries to the new site. There, temporary housing was available for those who wanted it, and in addition, a ration of food - rice and canned goods - was provided to all new residents for the first month.

This gentle removal contrasts markedly with the usual brutal scenes of eviction seen in some of the developing countries. People are given no or little warning, with insufficient time to retrieve their property or make alternative arrangements for it. Millions of people who have been evicted in the last few decades from the shanty towns of Asia, Africa Latin and South America have been terrorized, insulted, injured and even killed as they were forced from their homes. Where eviction cannot be avoided, it should be carried out in a reasonable way. In most cases, however, alternatives to eviction should be brought to bear.

When tenants are evicted from a shanty town, almost everyone is a loser. The tenants lose their home, their place in the social network, their considerable investments in time and money, and their self-respect. The government loses a stock of housing which can only help the country at times of acute housing shortages. The country also loses the social stability that the shanty community confers upon its residents. What it gains instead is a group of angry and justifiably resentful homeless people with a sense of injustice who are more likely to contribute to social and political unrest.

In her studies of the *favelas* or shanties of Brazil, Dr. Janice Perlman found that after the eviction of shanty dwellers, the crime rate was likely to rise. This was not only because people had lost their property but their web of social contacts and the cohesion that it brings had been for ever destroyed. With the loss of their place in society, their feeling of responsibility to society declines.

Evicted people do face other problems. In most cases they move far from their work so that extra cash, up to half their salary, is spent traveling to and from work. Women lose the small jobs like washing or child care that boost their family income. Others, separated from friends, family and support groups, develop psychological or health problems. As a result of these pressures, people become more desperate than before.

The shanty represents home and security to its residents. It is not a slum in the eyes of the people who stay there. It is a shelter that is suited to his needs, and most shanty residents are willing to work hard to keep their homes and to take responsibility for their improvement.

"No-one can appraise the value of my shanty", said one resident in the Brasilia Teimosa shanty in the coastal town of Recife, Brazil. "It is worth 26 years of struggle."

A leader of the Catacumba community in Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Waldevino, said, "We do not want alms, charity or handouts. We will construct and pay for our

homes." Nine thousand people were made homeless when Catacumba was demolished.

Through the eyes of the urban elite, shanty towns appear to be centres of disease and crime that threaten the wealthier parts of the city. Yet, most shanty dwellers are simply poor people looking for a chance to improve their life. They are striving to survive. This is often reflected in the names of the shanty communities. Brasilia Teimosa means "Stubborn Brasilia". Turkey's squatter settlements have names like "The courageous ones", "The hardworking ones" and "The undaunted". These names illustrate that the shanty offers the resident hope, an identity and a direction in which to move.

Why do evictions and demolitions occur? It is often a matter of prestige. The squatter settlement is often removed to beautify or clean up the city. At times of international games or contests in particular, shanties are demolished so that visitors will not see signs of poverty. Yet it is better to face the challenge of squatter improvement than to make men, women and children homeless.

Demolition of homes invariably follows eviction. It is regrettable that some countries have demolished more structures in a year than their national housing programme has managed to construct.

In its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, "Shelter and Urbanization", UNCHS (Habitat) wishes to make people aware of the alternatives to eviction. Eviction should be avoided wherever possible because to destroy any stock of housing does not make economic sense, apart from the disruption of people's lives.

One alternative is relocation but this is a very costly exercise both to governments and individuals and will also break up the fabric of society and disrupt people's lives.

The most effective alternative is to upgrade squatter settlements, in their established locations. This can be done using enabling strategies which help people help themselves, making use of community participation to the fullest extent. Upgrading of homes, infrastructure and services are all needed to create a reasonable living environment for the residents of the settlement. In particular, legal aspects need to be strengthened to give support to the people with regard to land tenure and similar problems, and building codes need to be modified to acceptably lower standards that people may reasonably achieve when constructing their homes.

The shanty settlement of Pulianthope, Madras City, India, is an example of an improvement project which did not disrupt the social and economic life of the community. This project was supported by UNCHS (Habitat) and co-ordinated by the Don Bosco Social Service Society (DBSSS). The shanty community evolved on a low-lying garbage dump which flooded during the monsoons. Conditions in the settlement were appalling and a comprehensive approach to improvement was needed.

The first stage was to fill in the land and to raise it until it was above the level of the floods. Then, through their own efforts, the community members constructed their homes assisted by a skills training programme, education programmes, savings schemes and leadership training programmes. Security of tenure was

conferred on all participants who are meeting the cost of the development through loans from commercial banks, to be repaid in small installments that people can easily afford.

Social amenities, like youth facilities and training, a health centre with health education programmes, adult literacy programmes and the promotion of income-generating activities are all aspects of the project. These are important development goals which will strengthen community feeling and provide a sense of purpose to many members of society.

This UNCHS (Habitat) project in southern India was essentially a creative project. A settlement and its community have been transformed for the better. In contrast, eviction is destructive. It destroys homes and it destroys lives. If we are to meet the challenge of "shelter for all to the year 2000", then it is unwise to destroy what we already have. It would be better to use that as a starting point for improved homes and settlements for the poor people of our towns and cities.

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

BREAKTHROUGH IN BANGLADESH: A PROFESSOR HELPS TO HOUSE THE POOR

Brainwave in Bangladesh

During the mid 1970s, Professor Muhammed Yunus, an economist, was teaching at the University of Chittagong. Yet, the theoretical economics he taught in the lecture hall made little sense as he surveyed the poverty of Bangladesh all around him. He saw a third of the population unemployed or underemployed and almost two thirds without land. People lived by supplementing temporary seasonal work with small-scale, low-skill activities. He also saw 100 million of the world's poorest people eking out their existence in poverty in a land beset by political turmoil, famine and floods.

As a result, Professor Yunus decided to go out into the villages and study the poverty of his fellow citizens. There, his thinking was influenced by several observations, like the fact that although people worked very hard, they made little progress in their lives. Another was that during the dry season when work was unavailable, many people were forced to go to moneylenders to survive and thus became enmeshed in a trap of debts which had to be repaid at an exorbitant interest rate of, perhaps, 10 per cent per week.

Realizing that what people needed to improve their lives were low-interest loans, Professor Yunus set out to devise a system to help them. His brainchild was the Grameen Bank which now offers small loans of about 2300 taka (= $US70) to about half a million poor rural people per month. These loans are used to finance small-scale business ventures like carpentry and handicrafts, home improvements, and purchase of livestock.

The recovery rate of the loans proved to be very high, around 98 per cent, because of the system of peer pressure that was used. Members were organized into groups of five, with loans being given originally to the two poorest members. Only when these first loans were repaid in full, could the other three members of the group receive their loans. In this way, pressure was exerted by group members to repay in the shortest possible time.

In a second, more recent stage of its development, the Grameen Bank set out to help its homeless members, of which the majority were women. Loans of $US350 were given to borrowers together with a supply of building materials like iron sheets. This project had by January 1990 produced 44,500 new units of housing.

The Grameen Bank has served as a model now being emulated in both developed and developing countries. In Malawi, where 55 per cent of all households live in absolute poverty, Grameen-type loans are given to families with less than 1 hectare of land. In Malaysia, a similar scheme is getting underway to assist very poor communities. Professor Yunus's idea has even reached North America, where similar schemes are being used in rural communities of Canada and the United States of America.

The basic point of the Grameen experience is that some of the stress of abject poverty can be alleviated to a significant extent by the provision of quite small loans. A large number of small loans can make a difference to the economic progress of a community.

With the growing realization that poor people, particularly the urban poor of squatter settlements, must be helped to house themselves, other new methods of finance are being devised. Some of these new methods are having considerable success.

Turkey, for example, has raised money for housing through its General Mass Housing Fund. During the first two years of operation, it has raised about $US8800 million from taxation of luxury items. One third of this total came from taxes on alcohol and cigarettes and the rest from casinos and other luxuries. In addition, people wishing to travel abroad must pay the equivalent of $US100 to the Fund. So far, 350,000 loans have been made for house construction plus a further 350,000 loans for home purchase. The Fund also finances the construction of infrastructure like roads, drainage, sewerage schemes and piped water.

In Sri Lanka, as in many developing countries, very poor people use moneylenders to help them through difficult times. Women lenders are felt to be more sympathetic to the borrowers and are in many cases preferred. The Government thought that this existing system could be put to good use to reach the poorest people of the community. As a result, the Praja Naya Niyameka (Women Money Lenders) scheme was set up in Sri Lanka as one financial component of the Government-run Million Houses Programme there. The Bank of Ceylon makes cash available to women moneylenders who then use it to give loans to the poor people who need assistance in the community. This service is specially streamlined for poor people to use - there is little paperwork and no delays, terms are flexible, and borrowers have easy access to funds. The personal relationship that develops between the lender and the borrower helps to serve, to some extent, as a form of guarantee. By using this system, poor people can avoid loans at high interest from commercial moneylenders, and use their loan more effectively to improve their lives.

Other methods of financing the urban poor include:

- In Zimbabwe, building societies now assist low-cost housing. Formerly, they helped only upper- and middle-income clients; they now give loans to poor people as well. A total of 140,000 low-cost units have been constructed in the last three years, through their help. After independence in Zimbabwe, UNCHS (Habitat) was the first executing agency to move in. The agency has worked closely with the Government of Zimbabwe to develop new methods of financial support for poor people in urban housing.

- Under compulsory saving schemes in operation in Brazil, Mexico, Philippines and Singapore, a certain percentage of each person's salary is saved for housing.

- Household savings are encouraged in Sri Lanka by the existence of a large number of branches of the National Savings Bank plus savings facilities being available at post offices throughout the country. Sri Lanka now has 5 million savings accounts in a total population of 15 million people.

- In some countries, loans in terms of building materials are now given instead of cash.

On World HABITAT Day 1990, through its theme, "Shelter and Urbanization", UNCHS (Habitat) hopes to encourage developing countries to devise and introduce innovative methods of finance to help their urban poor have access to adequate shelter. As the number of poor people in towns and cities continues to grow as a

result of urbanization, conventional methods of finance exclude poor people who are the majority of the population. New methods like some of the above must now be applied.

WORLD HABITAT DAY Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

FROM POVERTY TO PRODUCTIVITY: RECOGNIZING THE WORK OF THE URBAN POOR

The urban poor make an important contribution to the economy

Hendro Haryanto is an unlicensed small trader who makes and sells ice-cream around the backstreets of Jakarta, Indonesia, each day, for his livelihood. His day starts early, around 4 a.m. when he must obtain ice and prepare his day's supply of ice-cream. By 10 a.m. he is out in the city to ply his trade.

Forced to the backstreets to avoid the arm of the law who would seize his cart and equipment, selling continues slowly through the day. He may return around 9 p.m., eat a quick supper and fall wearily into bed. He repeats the same routine every day but scarcely makes enough for survival.

The day also starts early for Haseena, a mother of six children, who lives in Bombay. Haseena collects waste paper in the local market for most of the morning and then sits down with her children in the afternoon to straighten and smooth the paper and tie it up in tidy bundles. The she is off to the scrap dealer to sell it, and with the proceeds, buy rice and lentils for supper. At the end of the day, Haseena is exhausted. She has worked hard but has little to show for her efforts.

These two sketches of the lives of real people typify the working conditions experienced by millions of urban poor struggling to survive in the cities of the developing world. Men, women and children work for long hours for little financial gain. Their work is never adequately paid and their working conditions are often appalling. They have little time to rest, or even to care adequately for their families.

For many years, the urban poor who live in shanty settlements were considered to be an unnecessary hindrance to the city. It was thought that they contributed nothing and took much in the way of services. In addition, they were a health and security risk. Yet, since the 1970s, a number of studies have produced evidence that the urban poor make a substantial contribution to the economy of the city and the country. They are not in any way marginal to the life of the city; they are an integral part of it.

The work they offer falls into several distinct categories. The urban poor provide cheap unskilled and semi-skilled labour for the formal sector in construction, in services and in factory work. These vast reserves of inexpensive labour are what has enabled countries like the Republic of Korea and Singapore to be among the newly industrialized countries (NIC's). These "economic tigers" of South-East Asia set out to produce high-quality consumer goods for export which would be competitive on the world market. Only huge reserves of cheap labour could have made these economic transformations possible.

Within the informal sector, petty trading, particularly hawking or peddling, is an important source of employment to many people newly arrived in the cities from the rural areas. A little capital is needed, often provided initially by family and friends and then the migrant sets out to hawk plastic ware, trinkets or foodstuffs. Food like snacks and savouries, sweets and cakes, even complete meals, are often made by the women and then sold in the streets by men and children. Men often prepare and sell drinks of various kinds, chilled fruit and ice-creams.

Another form of occupation found in many developing countries is waste recycling where items like paper, bottles, tins, glass and plastic, that have been discarded by more affluent members of society, are made available for use again. These materials can be utilized in small artisanal or cottage industries, such as the preparation of drinking cups from tin cans, and stoves from oil cans. Recycling plays

an important part in the preparation of building materials for use in the informal sector. As much as 90 per cent of materials for low-cost building are locally produced, using some ingenious techniques, which again emphasize the resourcefulness of poor people.

All these, in addition, reduce the amount of waste to be handled by city councils, keeping down costs, and make small items like bottles available to low-income consumers. Perhaps of greatest significance are the savings to the country in terms of energy costs and saved foreign exchange as the need for imported raw materials can be reduced.

In the informal sector, women undertake a wide variety of occupations, from the sales of fruit and vegetables to laundry work or child minding in their houses. In the newly industrialized countries, women undertake "outwork" which is contract work for factories to be done at home. Contracts include sticking labels on garments and pressing out plastic shapes from moulds. In these, and other tasks, the children often help.

In most developing countries, poor urban women often do income-generating work at home as well as their other duties. They make paper bags and boxes, do sewing, knitting and crocheting, laundry work, and childminding. In many countries, women also offer their services as children's nurses, housemaids and cooks. Hard work, long hours and little financial benefit are characteristics of the working situation of the urban poor.

What often stands between the informal traders and a better life is simply the lack of a licence to legalize their operations. With a licence, they would no longer be subjected to harassment from the authorities nor would they have to work "underground" and out of sight, both of which increase their hardship.

UNCHS (Habitat), in its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, "Shelter and Urbanization", recognizes that the urban poor are an important resource, both as a pool for the labour market and as providers of goods and services in the cities. It recognizes the economic contribution their work makes to their countries. UNCHS (Habitat) calls on governments to legitimize the work of the poor and make it easier for them to obtain licences and so to function as a recognized and legal part of the economy, free from pressures and harassment. Governments could thus utilize this vast labour pool to their greater advantage, leading to increased productivity and faster economic development in their particular countries.

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

SELF-HELP IN HOUSING: AN ENABLING APPROACH

Governments should now enable people to build their own homes

After her husband died, Mrs. Virginia Churungi, a Zimbabwean market trader, gave up all hope of moving from the one-roomed lodging in which she was trying to raise her family. Yet now she lives in a six-room house with running water. If she looks pleased with her new home, she has good reason: she built it herself!

How did this remarkable change come into Mrs. Churungi's life? It happened because she was offered a chance to participate in a low-cost housing project run by the Zimbabwean Government, UNDP, and UNCHS (Habitat). When selections for the project were made, women were given the same chance as men, and as it turned out, about one third of the 1250 houses in the project were allocated to women heads of households.

In recent years, the Zimbabwean Government has made changes to help people obtain housing. Land and property can now be registered in a woman's name, and housing loans are available for poor people. The building societies in Zimbabwe now offer loans, not only to upper- and middle-income people, but to those of low-income as well. A loan of up to $Z3000 (=$US5100) can now be obtained by people of below average income to be repaid slowly at around $Z30 per month, a rate that most people can afford.

The community is directly involved with the project. Houses are built on a self-help basis by groups who co-operate together, using the skills they have acquired at courses and workshops organized as part of the project. Community members can choose their plan, and decide how best to approach the work.

The project demonstrates a new approach to housing the poor. The numbers of people living in towns and cities is steadily rising as a result of urbanization which includes both migration to the cities as well as the net increase of people already living there. Governments have now realized that they can no longer provide housing for each family. Governments have neither the money nor the facilities.

The new philosophy has developed out of the experiences of housing the poor in previous decades. It became known as the "enabling approach". The government will enable the people to improve their housing conditions themselves. To achieve this, governments must make things easier by relaxing the rules and regulations which might restrict the efforts of the people. Land tenure must also be guaranteed. If it is not, people will have no interest in investing their time and money in their home. Governments must also be willing to modify building codes and make them more realistic and appropriate to people's needs. Financial arrangements, suitable for poor people need to be made. In addition, governments must accept responsibility for infrastructure, like piped water and sewage disposal, as well as social facilities like schools and clinics, as these are items that the community cannot easily provide themselves. Supplies of building materials must also be made available. Governments must encourage and support everyone involved in the housing challenge to make their contribution. Above all, the people must be involved in the preparation of the homes they are to use - from the planning stage to the final construction.

One of the first governments to become committed to the enabling approach was the Government of Sri Lanka, whose Million Houses Programme aims to support family and community involvement in housing. Improvements, through upgrading of slum and squatter settlements, and construction of some new

buildings, for at least 1 million homes, is being attempted. This is essentially a people-centred development project which is receiving support from the state.

UNCHS (Habitat) is using enabling policies as a basic strategy in its work around the world, as in the *bustee* (squatter settlement) improvement programme in Calcutta; its low- cost housing project in Mogadiscio, Somalia; an integrated development project in three Peruvian cities; and in the upgrading of squatter settlements in the Aguablanca region of Cali, Colombia.

Community participation is an essential feature of the enabling strategy. UNCHS (Habitat) has therefore developed a global project to strengthen community participation so that it can play its vital role in shelter development for low-income groups. This project is being carried out with financial assistance from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Training methods are being developed which are now in use in three projects - in Bolivia, Sri Lanka and Zambia - giving on-the-job training at two levels to government officers, and through intermediaries, to members of the grass-roots community.

Through its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, "Shelter and Urbanization", and through its Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, UNCHS (Habitat) supports the enabling policies which basically encourage poor people to use their skills and financial resources in the most effective ways. UNCHS (Habitat) now calls on governments to streamline bureaucratic procedures to help people to become involved in housing activities which will enable them to produce low-cost housing, for their own benefit and that of the country.

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

SQUALOR IN OUR CITIES: THE ENVIRONMENT OF NEGLECT

Many diseases result from a poor living environment

Each day, 16,000 infants die from diseases that can be directly linked to poor standards in their living environment. Of the 14 million children under 5 years of age who die each year, at least 10 million die as a result of diseases linked to an inadequate urban environment.

At a time when infant mortality is being fought every step of the way with drugs, vaccinations and rehydration techniques, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) still has this to say:

"Adequate food, clean water and safe sanitation are still the most powerful medicines in the world".

UNICEF 1990

Diarrhoeal diseases are the most serious killers of children (causing the deaths of 4 million per year) and are caused by impure water supplies and lack of sanitation, as are typhoid, paratyphoid and cholera. Where children cannot be washed properly, scabies and skin diseases can irritate and be a source of secondary infection. Intestinal worms can debilitate an entire population and can contribute to malnutrition in young children, as well as reducing their resistance to other diseases. All these problems can be controlled or even eradicated by the simple installation of piped, potable water and latrines.

The second largest group of child killers are the respiratory diseases - tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis and whooping cough - which spread rapidly in conditions of overcrowding, poor ventilation and where the health standards of the general population are low. These conditions are accentuated by generally poor living conditions and can be made worse by indoor pollution from inefficient stoves.

Other diseases can result from a poor living environment. Neo-natal tetanus kills 750,000 million young babies per year and also takes its toll of young mothers. This death rate could be reduced by having a cleaner home environment and access to purified water. Malaria, claiming 1 million young lives each year plus countless million adults, will be found wherever standing water permits the malaria mosquito to breed. It can be eradicated when settlements have better drainage, nearby swamps are filled in and when people are no longer forced to live in unsuitable areas.

All these health problems are accentuated by poor feeding of which the basic cause is poverty. This can be alleviated by employment and a regular source of income.

Problems of the urban environment are similar in many parts of the world. In the town of Merka, Somalia, where most of the population live in slum dwellings, the diseases of poverty dominate. Tuberculosis, measles and malaria are the main causes of premature death, followed by pneumonia, bronchitis and diarrhoea - all caused by poor living standards.

Some slums in Manila, the Philippines, have an infant mortality rate of 13 per cent, widespread tuberculosis and a 90 per cent rate of infestation with intestinal worms. Where settlements have been upgraded and conditions improved, health standards have risen.

These areas are typical of places where UNCHS (Habitat) projects are being carried out around the world. By making improvements to the home and neighbourhood environment, and by raising standards of home construction and infrastructure, UNCHS (Habitat) is making a contribution to the health and general well-being of people.

In the town of Orangi, Karachi, Pakistan, the disposal of human waste was primitive. Drains had been poorly laid and this resulted in a high incidence of disease and mortality. UNCHS (Habitat) was involved in a project to install a shallow-depth sewage system linked to communal septic tanks. After completion, the general standard of health improved.

Similarly at the town of Maxaquane in Mozambique, a UNCHS (Habitat) project set out to design and install a type of improved pit latrine that would replace the design previously in use which did not work well because of the unstable soil and high water table in the area.

In Bihar State, India, UNCHS (Habitat) working with a voluntary social organization called Sulabh International, introduced water latrines to replace bucket toilets, constructed pay-and-use toilets and baths and then utilized human excreta for gas production for cooking.

Calcutta's 3000 registered *bustees* are the site of a large UNCHS (Habitat) project to improve infrastructure-provision of drainage, potable water supply, improved toilets and paved pathways. When complete, this project should improve the urban environment, and the health of 3 million people.

During the twentieth century, the world has been transformed. Two main factors are responsible for this - an increase in world population, now 5.2 billion, and urbanization which is the mass movement of people from the rural areas to settlements plus the natural increase of people within the cities.

These two factors have had a major influence on the planet, bringing changes to the land, air, water and energy supplies on a global scale. The human population has been redistributed and is undergoing a change of lifestyle, moving from a predominantly agricultural system with a scattered population to a scenario dominated by industry in towns and cities.

Urban life and industrialization both lead to pollution and developing countries must take action quickly if they are to avoid the mistakes made in North America and Europe where industrialization came quickly and with little thought for the ecological or human consequences. Developing countries must aim for safe industrialization by installing pollution-control factors. Young economies can reap the benefits of urbanization and industrialization if they control the pollution that can harm and even kill their urban people.

The urban environment, and the lives of its poor residents, are inevitably intertwined. When improvements are brought to the urban environment, the lives of the people will also be improved. Through its work in the developing countries, UNCHS (Habitat) is trying to do just that: to improve shelter and infrastructure in the settlements to benefit health and living conditions of the people who live there. In its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, "Shelter and Urbanization", UNCHS (Habitat) points out that prevention is better than cure and works for a healthier environment for the urban poor.

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

FACES OF THE HOMELESS

Many homeless in the developed world are single men

Today, in October 1990, 100 million people worldwide have no form of shelter at all. They are utterly homeless. This horrifying statistic raises a few important questions:

- Who are these people?
- Why are there so many homeless people at the present time?
- Does the problem reflect failure on the part of the individual or callousness on the part of society?

The faces of these homeless millions can be seen in most parts of the world. One is a young woman, often with a child or children, struggling desperately to survive and keep her children. Another is an elderly woman, carrying everything she owns in a bag or a bundle. The "shopping bag lady" is sadly now a familiar sight in many western cities. Elderly women are also homeless in poor countries, but they are more invisible or more easily ignored. The face of the homeless is also a child in the developing countries, escaping from an intolerable home situation of physical or sexual abuse. It is a child in the developing countries whose parents can no longer feed it, making a bid for survival on the streets. Homelessness has many faces - handicapped, addicts, minority groups. Globally, their numbers are increasing.

Before the industrial revolution, and the resulting growth in town and cities, homelessness was virtually unknown. Traditional communities in most parts of the world absorbed and cared for those in need.

Homelessness increased with the growth of industrialization during the 18th and 19th centuries and vagrancy laws came into force banishing the poor or sending them to workhouses. Society started to reject its poor and homeless. Communities also changed, family structures were broken down and traditional customs were lost. The poor were no longer given support and care.

Unfortunately, governments even now rarely take responsibility for their homeless. It is usually religious institutions and voluntary organizations that do the best they can for the poor. Most of society, including the legislators, have looked the other way. The homeless now find themselves ignored, banished and shunned.

In the developed world, the face of the homeless has now changed. Once it brought to mind an elderly man with a serious alcohol problem - a tramp, a hobo, a vagrant. This no longer applies. Many of the present generation of homeless are much younger people - unattached young men, single women, family groups, children alone.

Of the United States of America's homeless today, for example, 65 per cent are single men, a quarter are women, and most are families or children. These statistics, based on a recent survey by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), pinpoint homelessness in the prosperous countries of the west. The homeless include those that are mentally ill, drug addicts and alcoholics, epileptics and runaways. Many are normal people who are chronically unemployed, the victims of economic repression. They are sinking fast into disillusion and despair.

The high incidence of mental sickness in homeless people, between 25 and 50 per cent according to HUD and other reports, also poses a few questions. For the last 30 years or so, mental institutions have been releasing patients for whom no follow-up care or support was available. In 1951, there were four times the mental patients that were found in institutions in 1981. Has this policy benefited society, or the patients themselves?

Yet, there are others in whom the stresses of street life, the hunger, cold and isolation, will induce a state of mental instability. If these individuals were given food and shelter and hope, some of their psychiatric symptoms would certainly abate.

Another group of homeless are the addicts - to alcohol or drugs or both. In the United States of America, 50 per cent of the homeless have alcohol-related problems. yet the homeless may drink to escape from reality, to reduce pain and isolation, or to avoid hunger and cold. Similarly, some may take to drugs when they are giving up hope. In many cases, homelessness is not the symptom, but the cause of addiction.

A shortage of low-cost housing intensifies all these problems. In some western countries there is virtually no housing for low-income people. As a typical case, an American woman recently paid $US 250 per month for a small, squalid, rat- infested room in a lodging house with toilet facilities shared with another 80 residents. There was simply no alternative.

In the developing countries, the scenario is rather different. With a tradition of home-building in the rural areas, urban migrants help each other to construct their simple homes. Such people are never utterly homeless. Their efforts can be seen in the shanty settlements around the cities of the developing world.

Yet there are those who cannot do this. These became the absolute homeless, the poorest of the poor. This group contains many with physical handicaps. They may be blind or lame, be the victim of a road accident, or suffering from polio, leprosy or another disfiguring disease. The mentally handicapped are also there as most developing countries have insufficient faculties to care for their mentally sick. However, the homeless of the developing world have one common characteristic: absolute poverty. They are utterly poor and trapped in a web of hunger, ill-health, unemployment and destitution.

The street children of developing countries pose a particular and poignant problem. Parking cars, begging for coins around restaurants, they pinpoint the enormous gulf between the rich and the poor in the developing countries. Many have left home because their parents can no longer feed them and so they live and die on the streets, vulnerable to street crime, the sex industry, alcohol and drugs. Street boys may turn into thieves, street girls into prostitutes.

The most homeless of all are the refugees, as they have not even a country to live in. In 1988, there were 12 million across the world. There are three million Afghani refugees in Pakistan and one million in Iran. Ethiopian refugees have migrated to the Sudan, Somalia and other African countries. Vietnamese boat people risk pirates and the high seas in an attempt to reach Hong Kong. The list is endless. They are refugees from famine, drought, war and political unrest. Most are women and children.

Through its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, UNCHS (Habitat) seeks to remind the world of the plight and the growing problem of the homeless. 1987 was the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and UNCHS (Habitat) led a global initiative to create awareness, develop projects and encourage governments to develop national strategies to assist their homeless. By promoting an enabling strategy, UNCHS (Habitat) encourages governments to make things easier for homeless to help themselves. In its Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, UNCHS (Habitat) is pushing for reasonable shelter for all in the next 10 years. This could be achieved; it is not an impossible goal. UNCHS (Habitat) with its more than 250 projects in over 100 countries is showing the way, attacking the problems of homelessness and inadequate shelter.

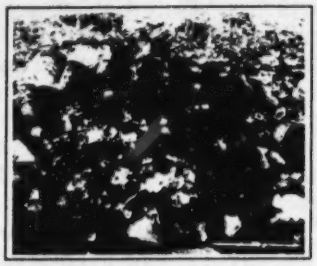
Other organizations have made a hopeful start to deal with homelessness. Street children in Bogotá are now receiving shelter; Rio de Janeiro has faced the problem of its street children and has set up shelters for their care; New York has issued legislations to house its homeless; Los Angeles is building low-cost homes for the poor. These valuable contributions are a start and similar approaches can now be seen in other parts of the world.

But they are not enough. What is needed is a global change in attitude and a global responsibility to the problems of the homeless. The world has the technologies and it has the finance, but it has not yet given **people** priority. The world is spending its money on other things. The Bruntland Commission estimated military spending to be $US 900 milliard per year. Dr. Willy Brandt points out that with little more than the worldwide military expenditure for one single day, clear drinking water could be installed for most of the world's population over a 10- year period. The cost of military expenditure for a few more days could house the millions of homeless now being denied a basic human need.

WORLD HABITAT DAY **Monday 1 October 1990**

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

CASH FROM TRASH - MAKING URBAN REFUSE PAY



Scavengers play an important role in the economy of a country by recycling useful materials

In the picturesque Kathmandu Valley of Nepal with its shrines and temples and historic sites, 50 per cent of the children die before the age of five. This is not surprising as they play among the piles of urban refuse that lie rotting in the streets, the breeding grounds of germs and home to rats and flies.

In rural Nepal, the traditional lifestyle produced very little refuse. Everything was used or recycled and all refuse- related tasks were carried out by one sector of society - the scavengers.

Urbanization of Nepal has given rise to the refuse problem. The 300,000 residents of Kathmandu now produce 100 tons of refuse daily of which all is dumped in the streets. Neither the official city cleaners nor the traditional scavengers are able to cope with the rising tide of trash. The traditional systems of disposal and recycling have broken down and new methods to deal with the problem are urgently needed.

In Cairo, Egypt, a similar and vital service is carried out by a scavenger community called the Zabbaleen. In this case they are trying to move with the times. Traditionally the Zabbaleen use donkey carts to transport refuse from the residential areas of Cairo to their settlements outside the city where the women and children sort it through by hand. Useful materials like metal and glass are sold and recycled; organic waste is fed to pigs. Now, as the city of Cairo grows, there are pressures on the Zabbaleen to mechanize their collection methods. They are attempting to do so, and to continue their useful services to the growing cities.

Most cities of the developing world are served by a group of underprivileged people who work as scavengers. In some cases, as many as 2 per cent of the population survive on the refuse of the rich. Some make a reasonable living, but others live, work and die on the rubbish tips of the developing world with little gain.

Scavenging is a useful service in the developing countries. It reduces the quantities of refuse that the city authorities must handle, recycles useful materials and creates employment opportunities from the recycled goods. The re-use of material saves energy and foreign exchange reserves that would otherwise be used to buy new raw materials. The role of scavengers therefore needs to be appreciated as playing an important role in the economy of the country. Their work should be given recognition so that they are integrated more fully into society and incorporated into plans to modernize the refuse disposal systems of the developing world.

Cities are producing enormous quantities of urban refuse. In low-income countries, cities like Jakarta in Indonesia, generate about half a kilo of waste per person per day. Middle-income countries, cities like Cairo, Manila and Hong Kong, produce more. A city of 1 million people is likely to produce 1,000 metric tons of refuse per day. As countries urbanize and cities grow, the amount of trash they generate grows accordingly.

Disposal of this amount of urban waste is emerging as a major environmental problem for the city managers and one that becomes more costly by the day. Waste disposal may absorb one per cent of the gross national product of a country and from 20 to 40 per cent of the municipal budget of cities in the developing world. As cities grow in size, dumping sites are moved further away from the collection areas and costs rise. Vehicles to transport the refuse may have been imported from a developed country where refuse disposal problems are different. The vehicle may

be totally inappropriate to the high density and heavy loads of refuse, the bad roads, and the difficulty of access, particularly to squatter settlements. Maintenance of inadequate vehicles will also be costly. An efficient refuse disposal system in developing countries must be based on a fleet of appropriate and reliable vehicles.

Appropriate transport for refuse collection is just one area of research being carried out by UNCHS (Habitat) for the developing countries. Another is the possibility of processing household refuse in the home. Apart from the development of new technologies, UNCHS (Habitat) implements projects on refuse management. A project to promote recycling of refuse in the developing countries of Asia started earlier this year with funds from the Government of the Netherlands. This two-year project will include the establishment of small-scale industries using recycled materials from domestic waste. It will help the poorest members of society, and help to conserve the natural and financial resources of developing countries in an environmentally sound way.

Some solutions are also being found in the developing countries themselves. As recycled bottles, metal and paper find ready markets, what remains from household waste is largely organic kitchen wastes which can easily be made into compost. This is now being done very successfully at the 600,000-person squatter settlement of Orangi, in Karachi, Pakistan. Some of the compost produced at this project is used to fertilize Pakistan's own fields. The remainder is earning cash as an export to the Gulf States. Not only is the project environmentally sound, it is also commercially viable.

Mexico City is also taking recycling seriously. At present, about 25 per cent of mixed municipal refuse is recycled, no small task in this city of 20 million people! It is recycling 70 per cent of its industrial waste, as well.

In Shanghai, People's Republic of China, the Government actually purchases domestic refuse from the people of the town. Six hundred centres have been set up to purchase 30 different categories of materials like metal, glass and cloth, which are then recycled back into the cities' industries, saving both energy and money.

The developing countries may also benefit from some of the techniques being used in the developed countries, currently confronted by a deluge of urban trash.

In Western Europe and Japan, each person produces an average of 2 lbs of waste per day; in the United States of America, each person produces 4 lbs. Each year, the average Briton throws away 160 cans, 107 glass bottles and jars, 45 kilos of plastic and paper derived from 2 whole trees. Japan throws away 10 billion cans per year, especially from drinks. That is an average of 90 cans per person per year.

Yet Japan is now developing its recycling technologies. By re-using 50 per cent of its paper per year, it saves 180 million trees. Two thirds of its bottles are recycled and re-used up to 20 times. Forty per cent of its metal cans are recycled with significant savings in energy and raw materials. This standard of efficiency in recycling is achieved by asking households to separate their wastes into different categories before collection.

Where recycling policies can no longer be applied, incineration can reduce its bulk to one tenth of the original. Japan incinerates 70 per cent of its urban waste to provide heat to homes and industries. Refuse from Finland is shipped by barge

to Sweden where it is sold and incinerated to heat the Swedish town of Umeå. In Uppsala, incineration of refuse provides 15 per cent of the heat needed by the city.

Dumping of trash in landfills is another alternative but it is wasteful if recycling of useful materials has not first been done. Moreover, landfills are becoming scarce and costs of transporting materials are rising. Japan dumps most of its trash offshore where artificial islands are being created. One of them, in Tokyo Bay, is destined to become a world class teleport.

Refuse in landfills produces a gas, methane, which if not controlled, is environmentally destructive and dangerous to people's health. Yet, when tapped, it is an important and underexploited resource. It can be used directly as a fuel, or used to produce electricity. In the town of Sunshine, Victoria, Australia, for example, methane from a landfill will generate electricity for 10,000 homes.

New technologies are currently being developed to make greater use of urban trash. A process in England can now turn wastes into an oil which has a calorific value as high as the best crude. Some plastics are now being recycled; old tyres are used to surface roads. Asphalt can be recycled on site with great savings in raw materials. New processes are being developed every year.

Both developed and developing countries should now be thinking in terms of urban refuse as a resource. It is a valuable source of income and can save valuable foreign exchange for developing countries. By recycling and basing small industries on recycled goods, by applying new technologies and improving refuse management, it should now be possible to turn trash into cash.

WORLD HABITAT DAY **Monday 1 October 1990**

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

SHELTER THAT PEOPLE CAN AFFORD - REAPPRAISING THE TRADITIONAL

Locally available materials are not expensive and still have an important role to play in housing

In July this year, a young man living on the coast in Kenya built a house for the equivalent of $US90. Built in the time-tested traditional style, the basic structure of the house could last for a hundred years.

The house has two rooms, with an inner courtyard, a verandah, and a shaded area at the rear for cooking. All the materials needed to build this house were obtained within a few kilometres of the construction site.

Wooden poles from the neem tree were used to support the walls; mangrove poles, which are rot and insect resistant, support the roof. These were harvested from nearby coastal forests. The wooden framework was lashed together with locally grown sisal, and the walls are formed from three layers of mud which exclude air, damp and insects from the framework of the house. The roofing material is makute, woven tiles made from the leaves of the coconut tree which is abundant on the East African coast. This coconut thatch must be renewed every four or five years.

Four workmen built the house within a week and small local industries received support. These included makute-makers, carpenters who make doors and window frames, and the artisans who prepare the frame.

This style of building, the traditional Swahili house, is found in both the rural areas of the East African coast and increasingly in the towns. As a result of urbanization, the towns and cities of the East African coast are growing and low-cost residential areas of Swahili houses are springing up on the edges of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanga, Mombasa and other coastal settlements. These buildings use renewable, indigenous resources, provide work for people and above all, are low cost. The people can afford to construct them.

Traditional architecture has evolved over thousands of years. It reflects the accumulated expertise of people who have learnt how to use available resources in inexpensive ways. Traditional materials are appropriate to the social and cultural requirements of the people, and the economic and environmental conditions of the areas.

In 1980, the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said, "There is so much sense in what people evolved over the years to suit their climate, their environment and their way of living. I think a lot of it can be adapted and made more efficient."

A growing number of new houses are needed for low-income families, as world population increases and people move to the towns and cities. This massive need will not be met unless traditional materials and styles of low-cost houses are made use of. Moreover, costs must be reasonable so that homes are affordable. UNCHS (Habitat) support an enabling strategy through which governments do not try to provide housing for the enormous low-income demand, but enable the majority of low-income people to meet their housing needs by making land-use laws and building codes more responsive to low-income realities. Smaller plots and locally available materials will make their task easier.

Throughout the world, the construction industry is dominated by cement and its consumption is growing. In 1950, the world produced 150 million tons of cement; in 1985, world production was almost 1,000 million tons. Yet, supplies cannot fulfil

the demand. Moreover, cement is costly and tends to be more expensive in the developing world than in the developed world. This is because transport and production costs may be higher, export- production personnel may be expensive and raw materials may not always be available. Also, if buildings materials have to be imported into the developing countries, limited supplies of foreign exchange are used up that could be used for other important purposes like food or health facilities.

This is why developing countries must now reappraise their traditional building materials and the indigenous methods of architecture that use local resources so well.

One widely available traditional material is mud. It has been described as the most widely used and yet the most neglected building material in the world. It is cheap, often readily available and produces buildings that are cool in summer and warm in winter. There are, of course, some disadvantages to building with mud, yet these can be largely reduced by appropriate architecture. For example, an overhanging roof can protect mud walls from the erosive action of rain.

Hassan Fathy, an Egyptian architect who recognized the potential of local architecture and building materials, once wrote that, "The solution to Egypt's housing problem lay in Egypt's history." He was referring to mud buildings in the Nile Valley which had lasted for thousands of years. At Luxor, for example, he found granaries of mud-brick built over 3,400 years ago. In Yemen, buildings five or six storeys high are built of mud. In the north of Sudan, where daily temperatures of 38C are common, houses have massive mud-walls built by a technique called jalous which involves the application of wet, sticky mud in consecutive layers. This produces a structure of great strength and the interior of the building remains cool. It is similar to the process used in building the Swahili houses and has also been used in many other parts of the world.

In a $US one million project in Sudan, UNCHS (Habitat) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) assisted the Government to produce a mobile plant capable of producing 20 million bricks per year of mud stabilized with asphalt, called asphadobe. In this technique, a small quantity of asphalt, usually between two and four per cent, is added to soil which is 40 per cent clay and 60 per cent sand. These asphalt bricks were being produced for $US12 per thousand at a time when cement blocks were costing more than three times more. According to UNEP, asphalt-stabilized earth is an ancient technique which was first used in Babylon in 3500 B.C. Asphadobe is now replacing burnt bricks in some parts of the Sudan, a factor of great environmental importance as brick-burning is using a lot of firewood and deforestation and desertification are already serious problems in many parts of the Sudan.

UNCHS (Habitat) has similar projects around the world. These include developing alternative roofing materials in Viet Nam, using locally-available resources. Construction materials for war-damaged areas are being developed in an UNCHS (Habitat) project in Iran. In Algeria, the use of local building materials, including stone, soil, sand and lime, are being promoted and techniques to use them are being improved.

The use of bamboo for house construction is being researched in Ecuador to produce durable low-cost shelters. In the central African country of Rwanda, research is being undertaken in locally available materials to produce an alternative

to Portland Cement. In Lusaka, Zambia, where half the population lives in shanty towns, UNCHS (Habitat) has a project to promote low-cost building materials from local resources. In this project, for example, sisal-cement roofing materials have been developed to replace iron sheets.

In its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, "Shelter and Urbanization", UNCHS (Habitat) realizes that if its goal of shelter for all by the year 2000 is to be achieved, the locally- available materials must be made use of. UNCHS (Habitat) also recognizes that existing building codes, frequently imported from industrialized nations by the developing world, are not realistic and need to be modified for local conditions.

Very few building codes for use with indigenous materials are in existence. They should now be developed along the lines of a code that was prepared in New Mexico, United States of America, for adobe (burnt brick) buildings. The international standards that exist for buildings of cement and stone cannot and should not be applied to buildings of mud, palm, bamboo and other traditional building materials that are being satisfactorily and safely used with traditional methods of architecture.

UNCHS (Habitat) now calls on developing countries to reappraise their local building resources, traditional patterns of architecture, and to reappraise their existing building codes in relation to low-cost homes. They may then make more progress in housing their poor.

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Monday 1 October 1990

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya

HEADACHES OF A CITY MANAGER

The solutions to the problems of the city are to be found in better city management

Mexico City was hit by two earthquakes in September 1985 which killed over 5,000 people, injured or stressed another 35,000, and razed large areas of the city to the ground. Essential infrastructure systems suffered -- electricity, sewage and water supply, and roads were wrecked.

A similar fate overtook the city of San Salvador in 1986. An earthquake left 1,500 dead, 10,000 injured and 30,000 people homeless. Damage worth $US 1 billion was incurred, which is about a quarter of El Salvador's national income.

The massive earthquake in Ecuador in March 1987 was horrendous. Vast areas of the country were destroyed; loss of life was enormous. In the city of Quito, 3,000 houses were totally destroyed and 13,000 badly damaged as were schools, roads and services.

City managers in the developing countries have to deal with these enormous problems. In times of catastrophe, they must reorganize their city to ease suffering and to reconstruct.

Even at normal times, day to day affairs of the city confront the city manager with a bewildering array of problems. The city is growing in size daily. People are moving into the city from the rural areas seeking work, shelter and services -- the components of a better life. Within the city, there is also a natural increase in the population. These aspects of urbanization are what are causing the city managers headache at the present time. In addition, there is never enough staff, equipment or funds. Moreover, the city may have to operate in an atmosphere of inefficiency, red tape, bureaucracy and in some cases, corruption.

In this difficult situation, the office of the local authority is expected to take charge of the complex matters that relate to land, infrastructure like water supply, sanitation and electricity, and the finances of the city.

The city manager knows that his city is making a major contribution to the economy of the country, that poor people are an important labour market, and that industries require a good water supply, a reliable supply of electricity and reasonable roads. He is aware that in competitive world markets, the country's economic performances depends to a large extent on his city's services. If roads are bad, transport charges will increase and the cost of the final product will be increased to pay for it. If services like telecommunications fail, trade will suffer and international companies may decide to pull out.

The city manager is also aware that if the services he provides fail, people will suffer. If water is not purified, diseases will result. If urban trash is not collected, the diseases will affect the city residents. If transport systems break down, people will have to walk to their work, or not go at all.

The city manager is a person with enormous responsibilities. The environment of his city is decaying and the poverty of both city and residents is a major problem.

The solutions to the problems of the city are to be found in better city management. With poor city management, the people suffer. With good city management, the people prosper and the economy thrives.

In its theme for World HABITAT Day 1990, "Shelter and Urbanization", UNCHS (Habitat) recognizes the vital role that is played by the caretakers of the city. It realizes the importance of providing local authorities with urban management skills so that municipal funds are efficiently used and public expenditure is not wasted.

On this subject, UNCHS (Habitat) has set up a project in urban finance and management for East and South Asia, as well as East, South and West Africa. The project aims to improve manpower through training courses for senior professional staff and for trainers in national institutions.

Another project on urban management is being carried out globally with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. This project will help to strengthen the cities of the developing world in their contributions to economic growth, social development and the alleviation of poverty. Seminars, workshops, exchange programmes and guidelines are being used to achieve these goals.

Another UNCHS (Habitat)/UNDP/World Bank project is currently underway, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). This project, on management and the environment, is carrying out research and policy analysis in the following five priority areas -- waste collection, waste treatment and disposal, pollution control, sustainable use of resources, and environmental planning.

In its work with urban management, UNCHS (Habitat) is helping local authorities in the developing world to find solutions to their growing problems.

UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (Habitat)
P O Box 30030, Nairobi, KENYA. Telephone: 333930, 520600, 520320
Telex: 22996 UNHAB KE, Cable: UNHABITAT, Fax (254 2) 520724